

**Introduction to Judaism 2021**  
**Union for Reform Judaism**

**Congregation Rodeph Shalom**  
**Wednesdays, January 20 – April 14**  
**6:00-8:00pm**  
**(215) 627-6747**

**Rabbi Jill L. Maderer (JLM)**  
**Rabbi Eli C. Freedman (ECF)**  
**Cantor Rita Glassman (RG)**

Books: [\*Aleph Isn't Tough: An Introduction to Hebrew for Adults\*](#) by Linda Motzkin, *Night* by Elie Weisel, *Essential Judaism ("EJ")* by George Robinson, for those considering conversion to Judaism: either *Choosing Judaism* by Lydia Kukoff or *Choosing a Jewish Life* by Anita Diamant, for further Hebrew study consider: [www.easylearnhebrew.com](http://www.easylearnhebrew.com). Please contact us if you have any difficulties acquiring your books.

Please:

- Bring Hebrew Workbook to every session.
- Read assigned selections in preparation for each class.

Every Friday: 4:30pm-5:30pm Meditation, 6:00pm-7:15pm Shabbat Evening Service

Every Saturday: 9:15-10:30am Torah Study, 10:45am-12:15pm Shabbat Morning Service

|   | <b><u>Instructor</u></b> | <b><u>Date</u></b>    | <b><u>Topic</u></b>   |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1 | JLM                      | 1/20                  | <b>Introduction, Shabbat</b>  |
| 2 | RG                       | 1/27<br>(Tu B'shevat) | <b>The Jewish Calendar: Jewish Holidays, Part 1</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 2: "Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year"<br>Read: Sacred Time- the Jewish calendar (79-83), Sukkot (103-110), Shemini Atzeret (pgs 110-111), Simchat Torah (112-113), Hanukkah (114-117), Tu B'Shevat (117-119)   |
| 3 | ECF                      | 2/3                   | <b>The Life Cycle: Birth, B'nai Mitzvah, Conversion, Wedding, Death, Mourning, Afterlife</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 3: "Birth to Death: A Jewish Life Cycle"<br>Read: Beginning of chapter and Birth (140-144), Bar/Bat Mitzvah (159-160), Engagement/Marriage (161-168), Conversion (177-180), Death/Mourning (187-194), Afterlife (194-196) |
| 4 | JLM                      | 2/10                  | <b>High Holy Days</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 2: "Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year"<br>Read: High Holy Days (94-103)   |
|   |                          | 2/12                  | <b>Attend 6:00pm Friday night Shabbat service</b> and virtual shabbat dinner (register with Melissa)  |
| 5 | RG                       | 2/17                  | <b>Holidays, Part Two: Purim, Shavuot, Tisha B'av Passover and the Haggadah</b>   |

**Introduction to Judaism 2021**  
**Union for Reform Judaism**

|    |         |                    |  |
|----|---------|--------------------|--|
|    |         |                    | <i>EJ</i> : Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”<br>Read: Pesakh (120-127)  |
| 6  | ECF     | 2/24               | <b>Jewish History</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 9: “Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today”<br>Read: (461-491), Appendix 2: A Timeline of Major Events (skim)   |
|    |         | 2/25               | <b>PURIM!</b> Attend the Adult Purim Party   |
| 7  | ECF     | 3/3                | <b>God Ideas</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 8: “The Philosophers: The Continuing Evolution of Jewish Thought”<br>Read: Beginning of chapter (408-409), Rabbis versus Philosophers (409-10), also choose any 4 philosophers to read about   |
| 8  | ECF     | 3/10               | <b>Prayer and Blessings</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 1: “Service of the Heart: Prayer and Ritual”<br>Read: Jewish Idea of Prayer (9-10), Blessings of Daily Life (21-22), Synagogue (47-49)  |
| 9  | JLM     | 3/17               | <b>Evolution of the Text</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 5: “In the Beginning: The Hebrew Bible”<br>Read: Tanakh (263-266), What is in the Hebrew Bible? (266-269), Torah (269-270), Sidebars (271-273)<br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 6: “The Rabbis said: The Talmud and Other Rabbinical Writings”<br>Read: Roots of Rabbinic Judaism (316-318)  |
| 10 | RG      | 3/24               | <b>Holocaust (Yom HaShoah 4/8/2021) and Israel (Yom HaAtzmaut 4/16/2021)</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 2: “Rejoice in Your Festivals: The Jewish Year”<br>Read: Yom Ha’Shoah, Yom Ha’Atzmaut, Yom Ha’Zikaron, Yom Yerushalyim (130-132); <i>Night</i> , by Elie Wiesel<br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 9: “Beyond the Rabbis: How Judaism Got Where it is Today”<br>Read: Evolution of Anti-Semitism (492-494), Sifting Through the Ashes (494-497), Exiles Return (497-500) |
|    |         | 3/27<br>or<br>3/28 | <b>Attend a Passover seder!</b> Attend an in-home or virtual first night seder, and/or the Rodeph Shalom Second Night Seder on (make sure to register).  |
| 11 | ECF     | 3/31               | <b>Jewish Values and Ethics</b><br><i>EJ</i> : Chapter 4: “613 Ways: Living a Jewish Life”<br>Read: Mitzvot in Daily Life (237-246), Tikkun Olam (246)   |
| 12 | Cassidy | 4/7                | <b>Social/Cultural Aspects of Jewish Family, Community and Conversion</b><br>--Facilitated discussion.   |

**Introduction to Judaism 2021**  
**Union for Reform Judaism**

|    |     |      |  |
|----|-----|------|--|
|    |     |      | Consider reading or starting to read: <i>Choosing Judaism</i> or <i>Choosing a Jewish Life</i> |
| 13 | ECF | 4/14 | <b>Conclusion</b>  |

**About Introduction to Judaism**

Welcome! This course is designed to provide students with a foundation of the Jewish faith, culture, people and history, from a Reform perspective. Class sessions will be run with the intent of creating an atmosphere of sharing, learning and growing. You are encouraged to ask questions, express feelings and offer input into the discussions. No question is too basic.

This is not an indoctrination class and there will be no pressure to convert to Judaism. Yet for some, it may provide the background and motivation to become Jewish. Conversion is a process that takes tremendous time and thought. This class is required as a first step towards conversion.

This class will meet on Wednesday evenings from January 20- April 14. Each session will run from 6:00-8:00pm (feel free to bring dinner if we are in person). **On Friday, February 12, we will attend 6:00pm Shabbat Services, followed by a class potluck dinner. Regular class sessions will focus on listed topics and will expand on assigned readings.**

Hebrew is the sacred language of the Jewish people and is found in our prayer and texts. It is the language of our holidays, symbols and traditions and it ties us to Israel and to Jews around the world. Therefore, we will devote the last 15 minutes of each session to Hebrew study.

Course requirements include the following:

- Regular attendance (no more than two absences).
- Weekly readings as noted, in preparation for each class.

Additional recommendations:

- Attendance at Shabbat services, at least monthly. You are welcome at Congregation Rodeph Shalom and other synagogues welcome non-members. Consult with us for recommendations.
- Meetings with your sponsoring rabbi 2 times during the course.

Of course, in Jewish life, the study never stops. Refer to the enclosed reading list by topic for more in depth study of areas of particular interest. And feel free to ask us for further guidance in your Jewish education and involvement. We look forward to learning with you!

## **Introduction to Judaism 2021**

### **Union for Reform Judaism**

#### **Recommended Reading List**

##### **Introduction Material**

To Life!, Harold Kushner  
Living a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant  
What is a Jew?, Morris Kertzer

##### **Torah and Tanakh**

The Torah: A Modern Commentary, Gunther Plaut  
The Torah: A Women's Commentary, Tamara  
Cohen Eshkenazi, Andrea Weiss  
A Torah Commentary for Our Times, Harvey  
Fields  
How to Read the Bible, Marc Brettler  
ReVisions: Seeing Torah Through a Feminist  
Lens, Elyse Goldstein  
The Red Tent (novel), Anita Diamant

##### **Jewish Living**

Jewish Literacy, Joseph Telushkin  
Essential Judaism, George Robinson  
The Guide to Jewish Living (Conservative  
Movement), Isaac Klein  
The Doorposts of Your House, CCAR  
How to Be a Jewish Parent, Anita Diamant

##### **Jewish Holidays**

The Jewish Holidays, Michael Strassfeld  
Seasons of Our Joy, Arthur Waskow  
The Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel  
A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home, Noam Zion  
A Different Night: The Family Participation  
Hagaddah  
The Open Door: Passover Hagaddah, Sue Levi  
Elwell  
Days of Awe, S.Y. Agnon

##### **Jewish Lifecycle**

The New Jewish Wedding, Anita Diamant  
The New Jewish Baby Book, Anita Diamant  
Putting God on the Guest List (bar/bat mitzvah),  
Jeffrey Salkin  
A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort

##### **History**

A History of the Jews, Abram Sachar  
The Story of Judaism, Bernard Jacob Bamberger  
The Amazing Adventures of the Jewish People,  
Max Dimont

##### **Holocaust**

The Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank  
Escape from Auschwitz, Primo Levi  
Night, Elie Wiesel

##### **Israel**

The Zionist Idea, Arthur Hertzberg  
The Making of Modern Zionism, Shlomo Avineri  
My Life, Golda Meir  
The Source (novel), James Michener  
Exodus (novel), Leon Uris  
The Hope (novel), Herman Wouk

##### **Jewish Beliefs**

The Way into Encountering God in Judaism, Neil  
Gillman  
Quest for God, Abraham Joshua Heschel  
Seek My Face, Speak My Name, Arthur Green  
Standing Again at Sinai, Judith Plaskow  
Engendering Judaism, Rachel Adler  
Teaching Your Children About God, David Wolpe  
On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader, Susannah  
Heschel  
The Chosen (novel), Chaim Potok

##### **Conversion**

Choosing Judaism, Lydia Kukoff  
Choosing a Jewish Life, Anita Diamant

##### **Intermarriage**

The Intermarriage Handbook, Judy Petsonk and  
Jim Remsen  
Mixed Blessings, Paul and Rachel Cowan  
Making a Successful Jewish Interfaith Marriage,  
Kerry Olitzky